

APPLICANT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

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Authorised By:	Director of CMRA		
Implementation By:	Admissions/International Office/PG Research		
Procedure			
Version	1	Approval Committee:	Academic Board
Date approved:	November 2021	Minute no:	
Status:	Approved	Implementation Date:	November 2021
Period of approval:	3 years	Review Date:	July 2024
I have carried out an equality impact assessment screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.			✓
I have considered the impact of the policy on the Welsh language and Welsh language provision within the University.			✓

Applicant Complaints and Appeals

INTRODUCTION

Wrexham University is committed to fair, consistent and transparent admission processes. Wrexham University staff aim to work efficiently and courteously, operating under the principles and procedures set out in the University Admissions Policy and our commitment to equality and diversity in education, employment and service provision.

This policy exists for those circumstances in which an applicant is dissatisfied with the conduct of our selection process or with its outcome. It sets out the basis on which the University will consider complaints about its admissions procedures and clarifies what applicants may do if they wish to request a review of a decision.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

A complaint is a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies.

For example, a complaint may concern the processes or information provided regarding admissions decisions, fee waivers, bursaries, or the behaviour of a staff member involved in one of these. Complaints regarding external bodies such as UCAS, Research Council, Social Care Wales or other funding bodies cannot be accepted and must be submitted to the relevant organisation.

An appeal is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision, or the wording/terms/conditions of an offer, or a pre-entry fee status decision, and asks the

University to check that it was made fairly on the basis of all the evidence originally submitted.

This policy is relevant to applicants to all modes (e.g. full-time, part-time, online), levels (i.e. foundation year, Bachelor degree, Masters degree) and programmes of study at Wrexham Wrexham University, including taught and research programmes. It is applicable to both Home and International (including EU) applicants.

It does NOT apply to applicants applying to study at a partner/franchise institution of Wrexham University. Applicants to partner/franchise institutions should instead refer to the applicant complaints and appeals procedure of the institution they are wishing to study at.

The policy aligns to CMA and QAA guidance on complaints and appeals (specifically the CMA's advice on consumer protection law (section 6) and QAA Expectations and Practices for Admissions Recruitment and Widening Access).

Complaints must be made by the applicant to the University. If a complaint is received from a parent, teacher, other adviser or relevant person, we must have written permission from the applicant to discuss their application with this third party. Any applicant may use the procedure, whether they have applied via UCAS or direct to the University.

Applicants and any individual against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.

General Principles

The University will ensure that all complaints and appeals are investigated thoroughly, promptly and with due regard to the confidentiality of all parties.

No applicant will be disadvantaged in any way because they have exercised their rights under this procedure.

Stage One: (Informal Complaint/Appeal)

1. The majority of complaints can be resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis.
2. If possible, the Applicant should normally first raise their complaint either orally or in writing with the Admissions Office (for Home students) or the International Office (for International (including EU) students), outlining the nature and details of the complaint. If the complaint is made orally, it is likely that the applicant would be requested to provide this in writing.
3. The initial complaint must be made within 40 calendar days of the action/inaction which is the cause of the complaint.

The following courses of action should be taken:

- Identify a solution through discussion with the Applicant. The solution may include specific actions.
- Identify a solution through the discussion with relevant staff.

A stage one response outcome will be communicated in writing within twenty working days.

Stage Two: (Formal Complaint/Appeal)

1. If the Applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal stage, under Stage One of these procedures, then they may elect to invoke Stage Two (Formal Procedure) within ten working days of receipt of the notification of the outcome of the Stage 1 procedure.
2. The complaint/appeal should be made in writing (an email is acceptable) to the Admissions Office (for Home students) or the International Office (for International (including EU) students). Where the complaint concerns any matters involving the Admissions Office, it should be made in writing to the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration. Where the complaint concerns an application to a Research degree, it should be made to the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration
3. The written complaint should set out briefly: the nature of the complaint/appeal, the informal steps taken (if any); details of the response received; and a statement as to why the applicant remains dissatisfied and; without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy which is the applicant is seeking. Any supporting evidence should be submitted at this stage.
4. The Admissions Office/International Office or Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration will acknowledge receipt within five working days.
5. Complaints relating to
 - a) the operation of procedure or
 - b) the provision of services or facilities within the Admissions Process or
 - c) the actions or behaviour of a member of staffwill be investigated by the Admissions Office (for Home students) or the International Office (for International (including EU) students) or the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or an appropriate nominee), as appropriate.
6. Appeals for the reconsideration of a decision related to admission to a course at Wrexham University will be passed on to and investigated by the appropriate Faculty Dean. An appeal can only be made where there are adequate grounds, defined as:
 - Procedural irregularity, in that Wrexham has not adhered to its own published procedures;
 - The submission of new material or information which is relevant and requires consideration;
 - Evidence of bias or prejudice.

It should be noted that appeals against the academic or professional judgment of those making the decision on the application will not be permitted.

7. The aim will normally be to communicate the outcome to the applicant within twenty working days.

8. Where it is impractical to respond fully within twenty working days, the applicant shall be informed in writing of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

Stage Three

1. If an applicant is not satisfied with the decision taken in respect of an complaint/appeal under Stage 2 above, the applicant may request that the case is looked at by the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (taught programmes) or the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) (research programmes) will investigate the matter further. Such a request should state the grounds for appeal, which should meet one of the following criteria:
 - That there were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint by the relevant Director
 - That the finding of the investigation was inappropriate in light of the evidence

Requests must be made by dated letter or email to the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration or the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) within 14 days of receipt of the outcome of a Stage two complaint or appeal.

The Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration/Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for establishing whether a Stage two investigation was conducted fairly and that all decisions relating to it were reasonable and justified in light of the evidence. New evidence will not normally be permitted at this stage. The decision on whether information may be submitted is final. They may call upon the assistance and expertise of other University staff members to inform their judgement but are not required to do so. Their decision on a complaint/appeal is final and there is no further right of or process for appeal within the University.

Monitoring of Complaints/Appeals

Written records of the outcome of Admissions complaints and appeals shall be retained by the Admissions Office (for Home), International Office (for International), Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration or the relevant Faculty Dean, as appropriate, in order to provide an annual, anonymous report to the Vice Chancellor's Board on the handling of such matters and any common themes arising.